



Tipuana tipu

The
Pretty
Invasive
Tree

by Joelle Kohn

Trainee, Master Garden Association of San Diego County, May 2023



CLASSIFICATION

PLANT FAMILY: **Fabaceae** or Leguminosae (the legume/pea/bean flowering plant family)

GENUS: ***Tipuana***

SPECIES: ***T. tipu***

COMMON NAMES: Tipu Pride-of-Bolivia Rosewood Racehorse Tree Tipoeboom

FUN FACT: Relative of Monkeypod tree

CHARACTERISTICS

ANNUAL OR PERENNIAL

Deciduous - Loses its leaves winter through early spring in San Diego. Blooms yellow flowers late spring through summer.

GROWTH HABIT

Fast-growing to produce large shade canopy. Seeds spread by wind to produce volunteer saplings.

SIZE

A wide shade tree. Height and diameter usually 25-50 feet, but can grow up to 60-80 feet.

LIFESPAN

Can live up to 150 years.

2023

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AREA OF ORIGIN

Native to Bolivia,
southern Brazil,
and Argentina

TO GROW

Light: Full Sun

Water: Regular moisture ideal, but drought tolerant once established. Good drainage needed.

Soil: Will not thrive in strongly alkaline soil, but otherwise not particular about soil.

USES

Ornamental
Landscape
Shade Tree

PINNATELY COMPOUND

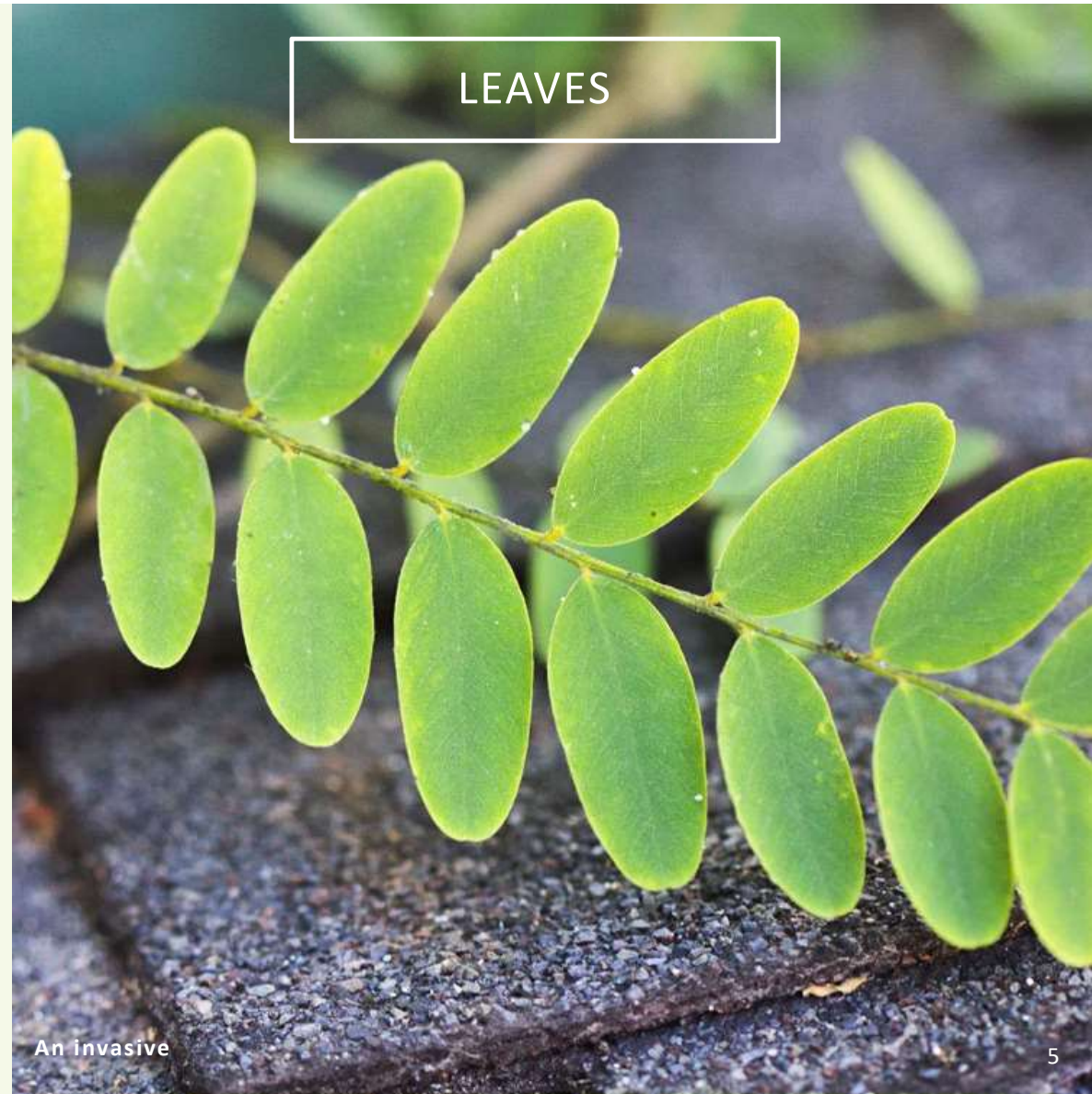
with 11–21 pairs of blue-green to greyish, oval to oblong leaflets.

LEAFLETS

Thin-textured leaflets are up to 1½ inches long by about ½ inch wide.

GROWTH PATTERN

Leaves borne alternately on stems.





FLOWERS

YELLOW SWEETPEA-SHAPED FLOWERS

Can be apricot colored too. Form in clusters.

BLOOMS LATE SPRING THROUGH SUMMER

Beautiful! But messy when flowers drop late summer.

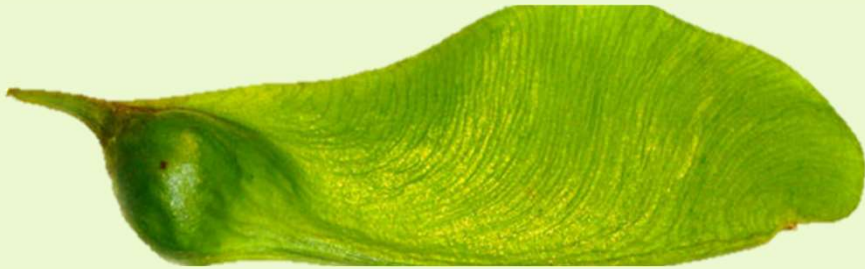
ATTRACTIVE TO BIRDS AND BEES

Especially hummingbirds

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SEED PODS



Helicopter seed, also called samara fruit, resembles that of a maple.

A samara is a type of dry fruit, not a fleshy fruit like an apple or cherry.

Saplings easily propagated from Tipuana tipu seeds.



Image by JohnnyWalker61



THE HISTORY OF TIPU IN SAN DIEGO



Kate Sessions, best known as the “Mother of Balboa Park” or the female “Johnny Appleseed” was instrumental in the planning and planting of many areas of San Diego. At the time Kate moved here, much was very starkly bare—basically empty land. She was instrumental in procuring many new plants from growers worldwide and introducing them to the area.

Born in 1857 in Oakland, CA, Kate moved south to San Diego in 1884. In 1892 **contracted with the city** to plant 100 trees a year for 10 years, in exchange for a nursery area in a corner of what is now Balboa Park.

A successful business owner, Kate operated nurseries in Coronado, Pacific Beach, Mission Hills, and other locations in greater San Diego. **She is said to have introduced** the jacaranda, poinsettia, orchid tree, bougainvillea, bird of paradise, and many exotic plants now common in local gardens and streets. She also inspired local schoolchildren to help plant trees, but planting alone was not enough—the new young plants had to be carefully nurtured to survive.

It is true that local botanists and native plant specialists often point out that Kate Sessions introduced exotic species that, in some cases, have **threatened to crowd out our native local plants. However, in her lifetime, there was not much known about introduced species out-competing the native flora.** In addition, Kate Sessions brought several rare and endangered species to our area that have managed to survive, such as palms from Baja, acquired by digging up a few plants herself on a trip to Cabo San Lucas in 1902.

~ Adapted from Natural History Museum “Kate Sessions: A Legendary San Diego Icon”

FAMOUS SAN DIEGO TIPU TREES

The Famous **‘Kate Sessions Tree’** of La Jolla, CA is a *T. tipu* and is close to the Garnet Ave & Pico St intersection. It was planted around the year 1928, making it about 95 years old. It is a registered California Historical Landmark.

Year Measured	Height	Girth at 0.3m	Girth at 1.37m
2019	17 m	4.24 m	3.38 m



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FAMOUS SAN DIEGO TIPU TREES

IN 2009 ORPHEUS PARK IN ENCINITAS HAD TO CUT DOWN A WELL-LOVED TIPU TO MAINTAIN A VIEW FOR CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX, BUT NOT BEFORE A MAN NAMED "JRU" LIVED IN THE TREE IN PROTEST.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

Protester is nesting in a tree

ENCINITAS: Tipu tree at center of park controversy

Jru tree-sits, children chant as trees fall in Leucadia park

Tree at center of protest felled

A 'sad' sight to see

ENCINITAS: City cuts down tree after protester gives up vigil



PESTS AND DISEASES



PHYTOPHTHORA

This fungal disease can cause root or crown rot. This pathogen thrives in wet conditions. To reduce risk, use good water management and plant in a well-draining area.

MITES

Yellow stippling on leaves caused by sap-sucking on underside of plants' leaves. Can be managed by strong water spray over several days, or by using organic insecticidal soap.

GLASSY-WINGED SHARPSHOOTERS

They will drain leaf fluids in Tipu trees and the waste they excrete dries to form a white layer on the branches and nearby surfaces. They can transmit the deadly *Xylella fastidiosa* bacteria. Control: organic insecticidal soap.

Distribution of Tipu Psyllid in California

Affected counties include:
Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego



A NEW PEST: THE TIPU PSYLLID



This pest was first detected in October 2008 in Carlsbad in San Diego County in California. The nymphs and adults are tiny insects that feed on phloem. All life stages (except eggs which are non-feeding) attack young leaves and branches of Tipu trees. Extensive feeding causes the leaves on host plants to curl and drop prematurely. Nymphs produce pelletized wax-like residue. **Adults and nymphs produce copious amounts of honeydew which fosters the growth of black sooty mold on leaves and branches.** Interestingly, this insect has recently emerged as a serious pest of Tipu trees in Curitiba Brazil. Pest populations in Curitiba are very high, trees are being defoliated, excessive **honey dew excretion is fouling concrete sidewalks and vehicles parked under Tipu trees.** Pest populations in several southern California communities have produced similar fouling of objects and sidewalks. In Curitiba, high density pest populations are attacked by **lady bug beetles which provide some control of outbreaks.** In the absence of natural enemies (e.g., predators, parasites, or pathogens) or insecticidal controls, the establishment of Tipu psyllid in California poses a significant threat to the health and value of Tipu tree plantings in California landscapes.

THE PROS



Provides beauty

Provides shade

Pollinator food source

Fixes nitrogen

Easy and fast to grow

Propagates easily by seed

Chill and drought tolerant

Forgiving of variety of soils

Often grows too big for urban or home spaces

Invasive root system to sidewalks, foundations, retaining walls, pipes

Very messy almost year-round

In some countries (S. Af.), invasive and overtaking native species

Can bring pests if not properly maintained. Tipu psyllids can ruin trees and area below trees.



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SUMMARY

In Southern California, though it is invasive, the *T. tipu* has not been a problem self-propagating and outcompeting native trees. It is a well-adapted tree for the area being drought and salt tolerant, and provides shade, a food source for pollinators, and beauty. Locals should consider planting it in large spaces like parks and large open areas.



THANK YOU



RESOURCES

- Master Gardener Association of San Diego County
mastergardenerssandiego.org/internal/planttags
- University of Hawaii Master Gardener Program
<https://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu>
- Plant and Pest Guide - Los Angeles State Historic Park, Wilen, C., Dimson, M., The University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Sunset Western Garden Book, 4th edition, Sunset Publishing Corporation, 2007.
- Trees of Stanford and Environs, Ronald Bracewell
- Monumental Trees Kate Sessions
monumentaltrees.com/en/usa/california/sandiegocounty
- Tipuana tipu, and Tyler too, Jim Folsom, Telleen/Jorgensen Director of the Botanical Gardens at The Huntington. huntington.org